

Facts About Becoming an Electrician



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The Department of Labor and Industries' electrical section is responsible for the administration of Washington State's electrical contracting and electrician certification laws. This fact sheet will familiarize you with the laws regarding training certificates for the electrical construction trade. If you need further information, please call the electrical section of the L&I location nearest you.

Who needs a training certificate?

All apprentices and other persons learning the electrical construction trade, or specialty electricians working outside the scope of their certificates, must obtain electrical training certificates from the department. This certificate shows that the holder is authorized to learn the electrical construction trade while under the direct supervision of a journeyman electrician or a specialty electrician working in his or her specialty.

What does direct supervision mean?

Direct supervision consists of a certified electrician working on the same jobsite and controlling the activities of the trainee at least 75 percent of the work day. Apprentices and others learning the electrical construction trade must have their training certificates in their possession when performing electrical work.

Where do I get a training certificate?

Training certificates may be obtained at the Labor and Industries locations that issue electrical work permits. See your local directory.

Do I need to renew my training certificate?

Effective January 1996,
any hours worked
without a valid electrical
training certificate cannot
be credited.

Electrical training certificates must be renewed annually in order to continue accruing hours. To renew your training certificate you should send your application for renewal, along with any verification of experience that you have, with the required fee, to the central office in Tumwater or submit it to your nearest field service location. You cannot advance in card years without verification of experience.

How many hours do I need to work before I can get the next year's card?

Training certificates are issued as first, second, third or fourth year cards. The number of hours covered by each card are as follows:

- 0 -2,000 hours/ first year
- 2001-4000 / second year
- 4001-6000 / third year
- over 6001 / fourth year

The next year's training certificate can be requested when the number of required hours is reached. If you do not complete the number of required hours within one year of the date of your last certificate application, you still must renew your certificate to be able to work in the trade.

How many hours do I have to work under supervision before I can take the exam to become a journeyman electrician?

To take the journeyman electrician examination, you must have completed 8,000 hours working under the supervision of a certified electrician. Of that 8,000 hours, 4,000 hours must be in commercial or industrial installation.

To take a specialty electrician examination, you must have worked under the supervision of a certified journeyman or an appropriate specialty electrician, for 4,000 hours in that specialty.

Is there a ratio requirement of trainees to journeymen or specialty electricians on the jobsite?

Yes. The ratios of trainees to certified journeymen or specialty electricians working on a jobsite are as follows:

One trainee working on a commercial or industrial jobsite for every certified journeyman electrician.

Not more than two trainees working on any specialty jobsite for every specialty electrician or journeyman electrician working as a specialty electrician.

Must I take an exam when I have enough hours?

Yes. The portion of the electrical law devoted to electrical trainees was written to allow a trainee to work while learning the electrical trade. When you have worked the number of hours required to take the exam, you may apply to take the appropriate electrical examination.

Where can I call for more information?

More information about becoming an electrician is available at your local L&I office. See listings under Washington State in the white pages or in the government section of the telephone book, or visit L&I on the Internet at <http://www.wa.gov/lni>.

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